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AUTHOR Letzter, Frederick Paul
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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to investigate how American high school students view their present world. Seventeen 10th, 11th, and 12th grade social studies classes at Nyack High School, Nyack, New York comprised the sample. The classes selected ranged from high ability to low ability groups. Students responded anonymously to the following two questions: Supposing that someone had fallen asleep 100 years ago and had just awakened, what should he know about the last 100 years? What do you think of the world we presently know? Tell us whether you would want it to be different and, if so, how it should be different. Student responses reflected the following themes and patterns: 1) material developments of recent times; 2) a sense of social chaos; 3) a wide variation of ideological viewpoints - from leftist-to conservative orientations; 4) a basic dissatisfaction with our present world; and 5) a sense of existential uncertainty. (Author/RM)

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THE WORLD-VIEW OF HIGH SCHOOL YOUTH IN AMERICA'S CHANGING SOCIETY

Fredrick Paul Letzter*

Nyack High School, Nyack, New York

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
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How do American high school students view their present world? We first addressed ourselves to this question as part of an informal investigation initiated in September 1970. In that investigation, we posed the following questions: What do students reject in history and of history? How do students structure their thinking in history and about history? The intent of this research was purely exploratory. Therefore, it seemed best to employ unstructured interviews and impersonal free-response questions in order to obtain data that could be analyzed and interpreted for recurrent themes and patterns.

As part of the procedure for this investigation, the present author with the collaboration of four social studies teachers in Nyack High School asked the students of seventeen 10th, 11th, and 12th grade social studies classes to

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*Dr. Joseph C. Grannis and the present author who served as co-author presented a paper entitled "Thucydides Began to Write When They First Took Up Arms" at the annual meeting of the American Historical Association, Boston, December 28, 1970. The material presented by the present author at this time (1971) represents a supplement to the above paper.

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respond anonymously to the following two questions:

> Suppose someone had fallen asleep 100 years ago, and had just awakened. What should he know about the last 100 years? Tell us what happened during the last 100 years.
>
> Tell us what you think of the world we presently know. Tell us whether you would want it to be different, and if so, how it should be different.

The students selected for this research were already grouped on the basis of ability and prior academic achievement, and the classes selected ranged from high ability to low ability groups.

Nyack High School is a four-year high school located in the old established town of Nyack along the Hudson River. The Nyack school district includes older established communities along with "commuter suburbs" of New York City. The Nyack school district appears to be a heterogeneous community where people of diverse age, class, race, religion, and ethnic background live. Thus, the Nyack school community includes Jewish, Protestant, Catholic, Russian, Haitian, and Negro groups. It also includes both lower and upper middle class students.

As Grannis and Letzter indicated in their paper[1], it is not assumed that this school is typical of all other schools, nor were the questions considered sophisticated enough to lend themselves to exact analysis. Thus, any conclusions drawn from this informal investigation are strictly generalizable only to this school's student population.

The authors Grannis and Letzter talked about themes or patterns reflected in the students' responses from this school. They first considered the responses to the Rip Van Winkle question. According to the authors, two contradictory impressions emerged from the students' answers:

> ...one a sense of direction in recent history, focusing on the development and accumulation of material technology and things in American and world society, and the other a sense of social chaos -- disorder, tension, confusion, and conflict -- that somehow has attended the material developments of recent time.[2]

Let us now turn to the students' responses to the question about the present world and how they might want the world to be different. Only a few of the students' responses were quoted in the paper read at the December meeting of the American Historical Association. The following material is a further elaboration of the patterns discussed and summarized in the above paper.

Before we examine the responses to the world-now question, let us first briefly consider how young people should be viewed in our changing society. Hazel Hertzberg strongly suggests that we use the model of the "Now Culture" to describe young people today. She writes that teacher training programs must take into account "the sub-culture of students themselves" -- "a sub-culture whose preoccupation is with nowness, whose homeland is education, and whose constituency is the young." In her view, the

"Now Culture" tends to reject history.

> ... in the now culture, perfection is to be achieved here and now. It does not attempt to incorporate changes into traditional patterns by reaffirming its identity with the past ..., nor does it regard change as a step toward a better future, ... Rather it demands instant and immediate satisfaction, regardless of the connection of change with past patterns or the effect of change on the future.[3]

However, given an open, mass educational system such as what Nyack High School might represent, we find that the diversity in student characteristics calls for some sort of typology with a broader range of types than the "Now Culture" implies. Therefore, the classification of data below makes use of a range of student types distinguishable, by and large, in terms of their dominant value commitment. The present author's method for classifying student responses was influenced by the method of analysis employed by Richard Peterson in his typology for American college students.[4]

CLASSIFICATION OF THE DATA

Student answers for Grades 12, 11, and 10 for the world-now question were classified in that order, and then placed along a rejection-acceptance continuum. Since the students are participants in a time of crisis as well as in a time of rapid change, it is understandable to the present author why they showed their preoccupation with the present world problems in their answers. As Grannis and Letzter indicated, it "is not just that the question focused on the present, but that the mode this triggered off is an involved one that one can distance himself from only through a considerable act of intellectual

discipline."[5] Therefore, only a few showed a historical perspective and made use of history. Moreover, most of their answers showed a concern for value-laden problems, and the variation in their answers correspond to a spectrum of ideological viewpoints -- from leftist-orientations (liberal and radical) to conservative-orientations.

Each grade level will be classified under three headings: (1) strong rejection of present world society, (2) a middle range of answers, and (3) strong acceptance of present world society. The first general category of "strong rejection" includes such subcategories as: (a) the "now" type, (b) the students who declare their desire to withdraw from society, and (c) the conservative-oriented students who reject the changing conditions as well as the agents of change in present world society, and who call for immediate action. In the "middle range" of student answers between "strong rejection" and "strong acceptance" one finds a number of subcategories such as: (a) a "conservative" reaction to a changing world society, (b) a "liberal" reaction to a changing world society, and (c) expressions of perplexity and despair. In general, though the student answers in the "middle range" may overlap with the answers in the "strong rejection" category, they differ from the latter category in that they do not tend to favor strong decisive action. That is, the students in this "middle range" are passive rather than activist in their reactions to society. There

were not that many examples in the "strong acceptance" category to warrant any further subdivision.

There are a number of student types in addition to the above categories that one might find interesting. For example, several students reflected a religious outlook and several reflected a racial and/or ethnic outlook in their answers.

Grade 12 Student Answers

There was a diversity of reactions to the world-now question among 12th grade students. Let us first look at the reactions of students in the high ability or "advanced" classes.

1. Student answers showing a strong rejection of present world society:

a. The "now" type, calling for immediate action.

> War must be ended; not in the near future; but now. Men must realize that war should not be made a political issue. It is not. War is a moral one....
> Poverty and racism must stop and they must be dealt with together since racism is often a cause of poverty....
> The world, especially the U.S. is terribly polluted. Gov'ts. must realize quickly -- no -- immediately, that $ must be appropriated to stop this pollution -- or soon there will be no governments -- because everyone will be diseased or dead from sick air, sick water, and sick food.
>
> (Nr. 0-84)

b. The students who declare their desire to withdraw from society.

Some left-oriented students reject society but do not call for immediate action as found in the "now" type. Thus, they describe the world as a mess, and then

point to their alienation as in the following:

> You have to go to college to make something of your life is another false idea. It's out-dated views on sex, race, war and people, in general have caused many people, especially the youth, to isolate themselves from society, -- including me.
>
> (Nr. 0-79)

c. The conservative-oriented students who reject the changing conditions as well as the agents of change in present world society, and who call for immediate action. Here is an example:

> On a national basis I think this liberal, anti-government movement should be stopped! A more national spirit should be adopted by the populus.
>
> (Nr. 0-77)

One student who reflected a "now" orientation did not reject history. He wrote:

> I should like to see, if not complete socialism, at least a minimum standard of living guaranteed-well above our present welfare rates....I want an end to the draft....Pull out of Vietnam....Day-care centres for working mothers.

This same student in his answer to the Rip Van Winkle question stated:

> Countries that once were are no longer, and new countries have come into being. How this has happened should be explained. For an American the history of minority groups and immigration in the U.S.A. should be emphasized, along with the growth of and changes in our political parties.
>
> (Nr. 0-72)

2. Middle range of student answers between "strong rejection" and "strong acceptance":

a. The "conservative" reaction to a changing world society.

> Up to very recently I thought I was moderate because I would listen to other people's views and not get mad

because I know that everything I say is not right and fact. I have now decided that I am fully conservative.

I feel that this country has lasted 200 years the way it is and why make radical changes now.

The kids today want changes in the world but don't know how to make these changes or have solutions.

This same student in his answer to the Rip Van Winkle question showed that he was not opposed to change per se. He wrote:

> Progress is moving very rapidly, with new things being discovered everyday.
>
> (Nr. 0-36)

b. The "liberal" reaction to a changing world society.

(1) This student favors gradual change:

> I have a pessimistic viewpoint of what is happening today. However, when I look at other nations I realize that in certain ways we are a lot better off.
>
> ....it hurts me to see people destroying or trying to change something for the sake of doing it....Sure there are a lot of things that need changing but violence or the complete destruction of that thing builds nothing.
>
> (Nr. 0-66)

(2) This student favors gradual change, and shows a historical perspective:

> The world I presently know has been said to be in turmoil. I am an optimist and would prefer to say that this world is just going through a change such as the Renaissance in Europe or the revolution in Russia. People say that the change we are undergoing is for the worse but that is their opinion. I personally believe that these revolutionaries are wrong but they have their right to an opinion and if they are wrong I feel that time will prove them so. I'm not saying that we should leave everything as it is but that the changes we do make should not be too drastic.
>
> (Nr. 0-41)

This same student in his answer to the Rip Van Winkle question showed that he was not rejecting history per se, but was reacting against the kind of history teaching that did not stress the relevance of the past to the present. He wrote:

> I think first of all that what has happened in the last 100 years is far more important to my knowledge of social studies than what happened in 1812 or something .... When take a social studies course I want to learn about material that is going to have some effect on me and not me ancestors....the history courses in school today tell me about things that happened to my ancestors and not to me....
>
> (Nr. 0-41)

c. Expressions of perplexity and despair.

Though there are elements of despair and pessimism in the student answers that came under the "rejected" category above, the students who "rejected" society decided on a course of action, or recommended a course of action, or as can be seen from the data in the other grade levels, the students might recommend withdrawal from society. The students in the "middle range" category complain about the problems of world society today and express their despair, but they do not recommend a course of action nor do they seek to withdraw from society. Here is one example from this "middle range":

> In my opinion, the world we presently know stinks. Starting with our own country, it is in a state of turmoil. Very soon there will be a revolution of some kind or a civil war. The young people are not pleased with the way

the country is run and the old people are not pleased with the young people. The government is in a mess, spending more money than it can ever make. To be a government official you have to be rich ....

The rest of the world is in the same mess. Russia will never yield to any ideas of the U.S. In fact the only reason for the world mess is people's greediness.

(0-37)

Here is another example which might be considered a borderline case between the "rejected" category cited earlier and this "middle range" category of perplexity and despair. That is, there are hints in this example of a desire to withdraw from society (her love of nature and her romanticism) as well as elements of perplexity and despair.

I am a romanticist. I am given to breakdowns because I find society demands things of me that I do not want to give. The arts are trodden, or exploited while football runs rampant. People who claim to be the best, I, who am not considered terribly bright, find stupid or incompetent. I want this world to wake up and see that beauty is almost dead along with the string quartet and air. I said I am a romanticist not yet disillusioned. I think the world stinks, that is humanity stinks, but I love nature, and I love to dance and read. Quite a contradiction, eh? Reading and dancing are products of humanity. So I don't really know what I want or how to get it. I always think it will change. I am one of those apathetic people you spoke of. Will I grow up to be more productive? I hope so. But the ranting of politicians always turns me off. I believe that I live in the worst era of man's existence yet, in man's adolescence. Adolescents have the greatest #'s of suicides.

(0-69)

3. Strong acceptance of present world society:

The world I presently know, I think, is a pretty nice place. Young people have more freedom than they

> have ever had, they are getting a better education than ever before. There are more and more varied things open for them to do. Science has made life easy for us. Medicine has made life longer and safer from disease for us.
>
> Of course I want it to be different -- in the same ways as nearly everyone else does. It would be fantastic to live in a world where there was no war, crime, poverty, corruption. If I could change these things I would. But I believe that no one can, and no one will ever be able to. Therefore, one should accept the good with the bad and do the best in his power to change things as much as they see fit and possible.
>
> (O-45)

Let us now examine the reactions of the average and slow students in the 12th grade who come from a lower socio-economic stratum of society compared to the high ability students discussed above. One notices a similar range of student types along this rejection-acceptance continuum. But there seems to be a larger number of conservative-minded students reacting to the changes in American society. Here are some examples for this group of 12th grade students.

1. Student answers showing a strong rejection of present world society:

   a. The "now" type.

> I think the present day world is a crazy mix up. Everyone is so afraid of each other that they don't want to get involved with their fellow man. I think the world should be filled with love and laughter. This fighting is all wrong. Why should I have to join the Armed forces not of my free choice. And go kill a Viet Cong who probably doesn't want to kill me either? All war should be abolished. Every war implement should be destroyed. Also pollution of air and land and sea should be stopped. The chemical wastes in the air and sea is ridiculous. Land pollution by the people should and can be stopped easily.
>
> (S-40)

b. The students who declare their desire to withdraw from society. Here is an example:

> The world is pretty much of a mess....It would be really ideal if all the carpenters, doctors, mathematicians, farmers, and other specialized people -- for that matter everyone, for everyone has something to offer, got together and instead of getting $ for their work --(money is so sick and materialistic anyway-- why can't we deal with people for people)--the doctors would heal the sick and the farmers would provide the food and the carpenter would build the shelter and the dressmaker would clothe, etc.,etc.,. -- Everyone would share and therefore be linked or connected with each other -- But ... I suppose a situation such as this is impossible to just jump into -- human nature being the way it is or has become. People are out for themselves and care about no one. They can only relate to $ and cars -- materialistic garbage. I think quite a few young people are trying to evade the whole commercial scene and get back to nature -- which is good. But too many lose this passion and get caught in the lousy rat race of society.
>
> (S-18)

c. The conservative-oriented students who reject the changing conditions as well as the agents of change in present world society, and who call for immediate action. Here is an example of such a student response. Notice also that this student seeks an earlier past society:

> I like the world to be something completely different than what it is now. If there was a complete reversal it would be like the beginning of time and people would have to find out what they want to know by experimenting and observing again. Who knows, maybe we would repeat history....
>
> (O-22)

2. Middle range of student answers between "strong rejection" and "strong acceptance":

a. The "conservative" reaction to a changing world society. Here are some examples:

> I think now the world stinks. When I saw "Hello Dolly" the thing that impressed me most was, how people living in

N.Y.C. could walk the streets at night, and the parks to. Everything was so clean. No dirty cars. Horse and wagon. Nobody in a rush just taking their time. Pretty soon time will be going faster than it is now... and thats the time to slow down.

(O-52)

I think the world that we presently know isn't really quite sure of whether it is going forwards or backwards. I think that a small group of radicals are planning to "take over" the government just like they "took over" the countries colleges and universities. This is not right because as it is how the people running the government and the colleges and universities know exactly what they are doing and they have a perfectly good and acceptable reason why they do the things they do.

(S-42)

The world of today is in a "bad way." People don't care about what is going on. A person could get shot in the street and people can just look and watch while he bleeds to death. No one cares until it happens to them. And when it does they scream and holler because no one will come to their aid. Laws are not really being enforced. Some judges are scared of putting someone in jail for fear they might come back to hurt him. Then when a person shoots a robber they get in trouble because the robber didn't shoot at him first or he didn't have a permit for a gun or he disabled him for life. Nobody wants to fight in Vietnam but they all want to fight, start fires, or cause riots and then have the nerve to call "Police Brutality." This is "Bull S..." and I would lock them up so they can serve their share and not let them all get away with highway robbery.

(O-62)

I think the world today is pretty bad, first of all its the people who make it bad. People complaining and making big shows on college campuses. People striking, people demonstrating and protesting the wars in the world. Water, air polution, discrimination against all kinds of people, because of color or faith. The fact that you can't hardly trust any people anymore, you can't walk the streets anymore.

I would want the world to calm down, I think we should have machines and all modern equipment, but I would like to have it so people would feel proud of their country, to love it or get out, have it so people could trust one another, have no crimes committed, just live in peace and comfort.

(O-92)

b. The "liberal" reaction to a changing world society.

Here is an example:

> I think the world today is in a very poor condition. We are at the point where almost anything could set off a nuclear war. in which man could destroy himself. The governments of all the countries are corrupt -- some worse than others. There is so much poverty, famine, deaths, birth of deformed babies, morality is at an all time low, and there is too much hate, greediness, lack of care, etc. in the world which is the cause of so many problems.
>
> I would want the world to be different in that people of all races and nationalities would care for each other, I know its almost impossible for them all to not hate each other but to care enough not to fight each other and not to be the biggest and best or to be able to beat all the other nations. There should be a cleaning up of governments, a better economic systems, so as to try to abolish poverty and famine. Also I would like to see all the countries to in some way unite to better mankind.
>
> (S-14)

c. Expressions of perplexity and despair. Here is an example:

> I think the world we presently know ROTS. There is too much harassment and violence. Yes, I would want it to be different. It should be different. in a sense to end all riots, harasments, pollution, prejudice. This is not even a world, it's a RAT RACE! Hurting people is the only way society knows how to exist and this is wrong. Maybe, if things were done more peacefully and not trying to cheat your friend out of his money, this might just be a nice place to live.
>
> (O-93)

In this middle range of average and slow students one also finds students reacting from a religious perspective. For example:

> I think the world is really changing to a bad side. People don't obey rules, like I was in N.Y.City and many drivers were coming to one-way street and the police was there and nothing is done about [it]. The police itself are afraid of the people. We are not afraid of them. Money play a big part in this World. You can buy anything with

money. They kill for money, get married for money.
My personal opinion if all of us had more God in our heart and at least once in two months read some kind of religious book maybe the world be better off, and God would help us.

(S-9)

This same student in his answer to the Rip Van Winkle question showed a preference to an earlier society. He wrote:

For the last 100 years this world has been changing. It changed to more of a machine world. We are more educated and its coming not to have a class system like low or high. The time is very important for us. We don't have enough time, like in the olden days and even 5 years ago, we had more time then now.
The young generation has changed a lot. They have no respect for older and especially for their own girl-friend (not all) but most of them treat them like boys. They are not gentlemen anymore like in olden days, it was. I wish we were living in 1800's.

3. Strong acceptance of present world society. Notice the tone of optimism and the assumption of progress in this answer:

In my opinion I think that the world we presently know is better [off] in many ways than the world that our parents had lived in. In other words I think that we have made many improvements from the time that our grandparents had lived. About one hundred years ago everything was different. There wasn't any modern houses, and many others utilities. Everything was done slower because of lack of utilities. Now everything is easy. Scientists had made many discoveries and we can really say that our life had changed completely. In the older days women didn't have any rights at all. And children don't depend completely on parents.

(S-4)

Notice in the following answers that the students qualify their acceptance of present society:

I think it's a "pretty damm good world" - I bet there isn't one better. It's not as perfect as people would like it, but then no one is perfect.
I would like it to be different in maybe one or two ways. If everyone would just stop thinking about themselves, and having a good time all their life then maybe we would get something done.
Myself - I am very dissappointed with my peer group. If they don't get their own way then right away it's violence -

it seems that they're always destroying something -- and pretty soon its going to be themselves. Everyone hates war and killing, so why create more by rebelling the way we do here.

On the whole the world seems to be a pretty good place though for some people it may not be, such as people in Russia, China, India, and many underdeveloped nations, but maybe someday we can all get together and try to find some way to work things out so everyone can have a good life.

(S-3)

Our world is faced with many problems the most serious of which are subversive elements trying to overthrow established governments. In my opinion our world is governed well by its present system. The only change necessary is more power to destroy radical subversive elements.

(S-21)

Notice in the following answer the limited concern over present world problems:

As I live in this world today I find complaints as well as compliments. I think with our way of survival we have accomplished a lot although there is so much to be accomplished still. I can't see complaining about pollution, war, drugs when these things will soon find an answer and sooner or later all the problems of this world will be solved. I live now with being happy I'm <u>fairly</u> satisfied with the world as I know it today.

(O-96)

<u>Grade 11 Student Answers</u>

There was a similar range of reactions among Grade 11 students as compared to Grade 12 students. Let us first examine the reactions of the high ability and above average students.

1. Student answers showing a strong rejection of present world society:

a. The "now" type.

A great change must take place in this world soon. Trivial things should be looked over, while the important

things should be looked into and have action taken to change them. How this could be done is nearly impossible to say, but something must be done!

The school should be changed to better equip people in their interests.

Society should be made to fill everyone's needs.

War should be ended.

People should worry about their own lives and not tell everyone else what to do unless absolutely necessary.

True equality should be reached among all.

(K-6)

The following student answer rejects the modernization and mechanization of society:

I feel that we should really try to get away from all the artificial things we've created. Not many people would walk to the store if there's a car in the driveway. And why not have wax fruit in a bowl and wear false eyelashes. It's fun to comment on each television show and what you would do in each situation, while all you're doing is sitting in your living room. People just don't look at, or take advantage of all of the beauty God's given us. People aren't living real lifes anymore. They might as well all be robots. They forget their dreams or dream of the wrong things. Who needs a big car when your VW gets you where you want to go? And who needs a VW when there's a beautiful day smiling and beckoning you to join it and be enveloped in Gods greatness.

If things go on as they are, we're going to lose our ideals and physically we'll become weak and unable to help ourselves.

(K-3)

The following student in rejecting society, suggests his view of "utopia":

The world today is not exactly harmonious. I would like to see a world in which each man considers another his brother regardless of religion, beliefs, color, or nationality. There should be no competition between countries but rather each nation working together with others and then sharing their wealth equally. I would force a disarmament on all nations with nuclear weapons because no one should have the power to exterminate the entire human race. All the rich people in the world should have to give up their wealth and it would be given to all the poor people. Everyone should be given free medical care paid for by the governments of the nations.

(K-36)

The following student in rejecting society, shows his preference for a past society:

> I think the world should go back to being mainly an agricultural one. Machinery has bettered our lives in some ways but it has also hurt us. We have more air and water pollution due to industries and machines. If everyone had their own farm, the cities would be less crowded and therefore, they would become cleaner with fewer slums.
>
> Also people should be concerned with themselves, not what is going on the other side of the world, like the U.S. and Russia are involved in Vietnam and the Middle East. This way people would be concerned over their own problems and they wouldn't have time to worry about other people's.
>
> We should have some industry in the world, but basically be an agricultural one.
>
> (K-4)

2. Middle range of high ability and above average student answers for Grade 11:

a. The "conservative" action to a changing world society.

> The only factor which deserves change is that which concerns the minorities. More specifically, too much attention is being focused on them, whereas, the world concern itself with the advancement of its majorities.
>
> (K-34)

b. The "liberal" reaction to a changing world society.

In this example the student's call for reform rests on the use of education and science:

> The world today is in mass confusion. There is war, hunger, and disease everywhere you look. War has caused hatred among nations and peoples. Hunger and disease has caused death by the billions. I think that it is impossible to change the world too much. The world should be a place of peace not of war. If the world could be changed this is the number one goal. War should be eliminated. The world should become better educated, that is more schools should be built in the underdeveloped nations of the world so that they could learn to depend more on themselves. They should be taught how to farm so more food can be grown. They should be taught how to become scientists so disease can be eliminated. More aid should be sent to these countries. If the world could be changed then I'd wipe out prejudice, thereby eliminating racial problems in the world.
>
> (K-23)

c. Expressions of perplexity and despair. There were no clear examples in the high ability and above average student answers of this grade level that reflect just perplexity and despair. However, many of the examples cited for the other categories did include elements of despair. But they went beyond this by recommending a course of action in keeping with their ideological or political perspective.

In this middle range of high ability and above average student answers for Grade 11 one also found this example which reflected a religious outlook:

> I think that the world should be more Christian. If everybody was a good Christian and loved his country and worked hard everything would be good.
>
> (K-32)

Here is an example that reflects a non-ideological or non-political orientation, and stresses cooperation and unity:

> I think that the world we live in is decaying. Everybody is revolting against everything. People don't get along. Countries are fighting with each other. No one is listening to anyone else.
>
> I would want the world to be different. I think people should stop all this revolting and <u>listen</u>. They should all listen to each other and see what they can do together. All the people in the world are united by one thing. They all have to live in the world. Being that they all have to live together they might as well make it pleasant.
>
> (K-16)

3. Strong acceptance of present world society. Here are some examples:

> Generally, I believe the world to be in a satisfactory condition. Granted, it is not all perfect. There is always room for improvement, but this is not all that important. I would like to see, though, greater efforts be made to peaceful co-existence, international understanding

and international authority. I would like to see the conflicts in Vietnam, Middle East and countless international and national conflicts be solved peacefully but justfully. I would like to see no starving naked children and enough of everything for everybody.

But these changes, I believe, will come about in due time. I am generally satisfied that so many people of so many colors, kinds, races, creed, etc. have gotten along as well as we have. Sure there have been revolutions--wars but this is only natural. As I said before never have so many had so much as presently.

(K-29)

The world leaves room for improvement, I don't know what it would be like to live in a "perfect" society with absolutely no war, no disease, beautiful housing for all, no prejudice, travel to and from other planets, etc.

There are many people who complain about the "Establishment." I'm not dissatisfied with it -- it's not that bad. The world can do without its unnecessary wars -- but as long as there is complete opposite views going on (communism vs. democracy or whatever) I don't know if this would be possible.

There are certain problems that definitely do need to be worked out -- such as war, poverty and overpopulation and pollution.

But, its easier said than done (as we all can tell.) But other than that, I'm basically satisfied.

(K-33)

Let us now examine the reactions of the average students in the 11th grade who come from a lower socio-economic stratum of society compared to the high ability and above average students discussed above. One notices a similar range of student answers along this rejection-acceptance continuum.

1. Student answers showing a strong rejection of present world society. There were no clear examples of the "now" type calling for immediate change. However, there were a few examples that resembled the "now" type in part, and

which were also partly idealistic. For example:

> Right now this world is really bad (in some ways). We are involved in all this war and punishment. It is good because more people are realizing that Love is better than War.
>
> I want to help change this world so that it will be beautiful and peaceful. If it is possible all guns and other means of destroying this earth will be destroyed. If possible, maybe all people could start thinking in terms of peace and maybe we'll have some happy news on T.V. rather than all this sad news. This can be possible if everyone tries.
>
> (BR-91)

The following student in rejecting society, suggests his view of "utopia":

> The world is in pretty cruddy shape -- people hate each other. We have wars and don't know what for -- some people are rich and others are poor -- for no reason -- the water is becoming polluted -- also the air -- there's an Ice Age coming by 1980 --
>
> If I had it my way the world would be one big country run in sections like states. Each section would elect a leader for a very short term, maybe 6 months. There would be no Established Church, no poor, no status quo. All of the people would have a choice, religion, profession, etc. The harder the work, the higher the pay.
>
> (BR-80)

c. The conservative-oriented students who reject the changing conditions as well as the agents of change in present world society, and who call for immediate action. Here is an example:

> It really stinks -- I think that the wars now should either be stopped or have the Viet Nam war be stated a "War." to have Americans, which I think can take over and wipe out the Communists and that all "Hippies" or any other person who doesn't like to fight in the war or even go in the war be shipped out of America. America is for people who keep it as an America. Think of WWII and WWI. If Americans didn't fight to stop Hitler and all of the other people America wouldn't be so great. Now, since the Gov't

is letting all the protestors protest and about the killings of Penn. State and Kent State, I think that, well its hard to say but the young protestors shouldn't have thrown rocks at the National Guard and again the national guard shouldn't have fired to kill, if they did. but fire to wound. they were standing up for their Country while the protestors were against their country.

(BR-79)

2. Middle range of average ability students' answers for Grade 11:

a. The "conservative" reaction to a changing world society.

The world is in a bad situation people are killing, others are becoming left wing radicals and trying to be peace loving, they are all love, love, love. You can't be like that, you have to look at the world and try to reason with each other. These radicals are also burning down buildings on campus, that does not get you anywhere, it just causes damages. We also have different racial groups fighting over which one is better.

Yes I would like it to be different because I want everybody together and not hating each other. Have a world that has no wars and also a world that has no fear.

(BR-19)

b. The "liberal" reaction to a changing world society. There were no clear examples in this group of 11th grade average ability students of a proposal for gradual change and reforms to meet the problems of present society.

c. Expressions of perplexity and despair. Here are some examples:

I feel the world is going to be destroyed, for man has too much power and is always reaching and is going to get out of control, for man is weak and power is unlimited.

(BR-98)

I think the world is a big ball of confusion. With dope becoming a major source for the body, and segregation

of blacks and whites and crime becoming one of the major games played this world nothing but a ball of confusion. Crime, so bad ... days it seems the only safe place to live is on a Indian reservation. Eve of destruction, tax deduction, city inspectors, bill collectors, population out of hand and there is nothing being done about it. Suicide, too many bills, hippies moving to the hills, people all over the world is shouting in too war and their still nothing being done about it. I say if this world dont change sooner or later then is going to be a big revolution and the world is going to be destroyed. And so I hope it changes to a peaceful, love world of people because I'm still young yet.

(BR-15)

Here is an example of a conservative-minded student reacting in perplexity and despair, and showing his readiness to accept dictatorship:

The world is pretty much the same as way back when. Because there are still people here, and where ever there is people there is war, bitterness, selfishness, etc. It wouldn't be so bad if people just accepted what freedoms we have instead of rioting and protesting for more and trying to become the most powerful person instead of being themselves as when they were younger.

There is no way it could be changed EXCEPT if people keep on doing the things above, and if people keep on doing these things some one as angry as I am and there are probably people and a lot of people that are behind me will either go wild destroying the world (I doubt it though) or start a dictatorship.

(BR-61)

In this middle range of average ability students one also finds students reacting from a religious perspective. For example:

The world we now know is bigger, better, and yet worse than any that has been. Progress has increased in a number of areas. Life has been made more comfortable by man, but man has also brought a lot of bad stuff. We are having more and more wars, more and more disagreements. To change the world I think is impossible, but if I was to change it I would try to as much as

> possible, to get people to believe in God, in Jesus Christ, in the Bible. Material things, money are nothing to us after we die. Life on earth is to prepare us for the future life. I feel that if I could change the world in this way, I think that all the wars would end, all the disagreements agreed on because people would finally realize that what they were arguing about was only nonsense.
>
> (BR-22)

This same student indicated in her answer to the Rip Van Winkle question the need for history. She wrote:

> . . We should know what had happened to be able to survive now. Without any background it would be hard to know what is happening now. We should know all of the changes in the way people live.

In this middle range one found students stressing the need to respect the other person's feelings as well as one's own feelings. For example:

> The world today is much to prejudiced and full of violence. People today advanced in machines and knowledge of things have got very backward feelings toward other people. The world would be beautiful without violence and if people would accept people for what they are with all of their faults, it would be like a Utopia, beautiful but impossible.
>
> (BR-86)

In the following answer, the student expresses his preference for more individuality:

> The world is basically a place where you are born, live with your parents till you go out on your own, then follow the ideas of your parents till you die. That is the principal happening. But today people are realizing that we should do what <u>we</u> think is right. We should live the way we want to live. We are finally throwing away unnecessary tradition to a mention a few, <u>MORALS</u> -- who says things are morally right? seems to me it should be yourself. <u>Prejudice</u> - he's got different skin, so he's different. Why? <u>Law</u> -- who has the right to say a man can die for his wrongdoings. Why are they wrong. <u>Socialaties</u>- Why go to a dance or entertainment of some sort and have to wear something that is uncomfortable and takes

away from the enjoyment you are paying to see....
The point I'm trying to make is that what is happening in the world now is that people are realizing that they should do what they <u>feel</u> they should do, not what other people say are right and moral and modest and good and bad.

(BR-81)

3. Strong acceptance of present world society. Notice in the following answer how the student qualifies his acceptance of present world society with a measure of idealism:

The world today is pretty good -- I mean I don't mind it. I'm happy! If I could do anything to change it I would 1st get rid of air and water pollution and plant some more trees and flowers and bushes Then I try to some way to destroy wastes so they don't destroy us. After that I'd lower prices -- so that people could live comfortably without worrying about whether something is paid for! and happily and afford many luxeries. Then I'd stop the wars and find peace, love, happiness, throughout the world.

(BR-9)

<u>Grade 10 Student Answers</u>

There was a similar range of reactions among Grade 10 students as compared to Grade 11 and 12 students. Let us first examine the reactions of the high ability students.

1. Student answers showing a strong rejection of present world society:

a. The "now" type.

The world right now is a pretty big mess. The war in Viet Nam must end -- we should withdraw our troops.
People must start fighting for our environment if we wish to live on this planet for much longer. Nobody cares anyone else. All people seem to be interested in is money. More programs should be started to aid the poor and give everyone a <u>really</u> equal chance. Too much money is being put into war and not enough is being used for things that really matter.
People should give more credit to the "younger generation" if they don't start doing something we

will! 18 year olds should be given the vote and maybe we can then start to be effective and get the things done that are necessary!

(F-80)

The following left-oriented student showed a broader time perspective than is suggested by the "now" type. He wrote:

> The world today has to stop its killing now. This can only be done when man excepts his brothers as his brothers, the earth as his friend, the animals as his loving companions, the sky as his dream, the sun as his provider, the air as his life, the trees, and plants as his beauty, Mankind shouldn't have to be protected from other man.

(F-81)

This same student wrote in answer to the Rip Van Winkle question:

> People who invent things should not just look towards the present but into the future looking for any way their invention could eventually kill the animal life on earth including themselves, if it could they should have sense enough to destroy it and the plans.

b. The students who declare their desire to withdraw from society. Here are some examples:

> ....I want to go away from all of the cities and people and everything that I dislike and just selfishly live a simple life in nature with a small group of people. With my mind it will never work. I'm not that much of a pessimist.

(F-28)

> Actually, I think this world is pretty messed up. There is too much poverty, crime, discrimination, and war. If people were more openminded all over the world a lot more problems could be solved. I think that countries should mind their own business take care of their own poverty stricken areas (US - ghettos, Indians, deep south)

instead of worrying about other peoples problems. There is hardly any respect left in the world. People are nosey and jump to conclusions. I can't think of many ways I can help so when I'm "of age" I'm leaving the congested, hurry up, gossip world of civilization to live somewhere in the woods.

(F-29)

c. The conservative-oriented students who reject the changing conditions as well as the agents of change in present world society, and who call for immediate action. Here is an example:

I'd end the war alright, but I'd blow Vietnam off the map first. And that would take the wind out of the protestors sails and shut up those dumb political leaders. And at least if world powers didn't like it they'd say at least Americans make a decisive move.

(F-67)

Notice how this same student in his answer to the Rip Van Winkle question showed his past orientation:

I feel that in the last one hundred years our society has slowly become mediocre. That quality, pride, and heroism are things of the past. Patriotism slowly declines and people settle for anything. It is a time when factories are booming, things are made in quantity and, so goes our quality. The wars of 1914-18 and 39-45 did in fact show patriotism but the people who were born after the war are <u>now</u> our greatest problem to the country. They plague our country with their unkemptness and cries of end the war! People who can't conceive what war is. It's failures and victories. People who never had to earn a nickle or work to keep from starving, as did my parents during the depression.

2. In the middle range there was a similar range of student types as found for the 11th and 12th grades. The following student answer, however, was somewhat different from the other responses in its future orientation:

The world today is one of new discovery. As hinted in the last paragraph [the Rip Van Winkle question] the world is a flowerpot with each plant being a new era.

> The seeds of the making era germinated a hundred years ago and now we are at the stage of the time for the seeds to resprout. Except there are no places for these seeds to be planted, and the soil is being polluted. We must be moved to another flowerpot, and another world. Scientists say that life could survive on Mars or Venus but they say that to keep the smart people who know that in case of a world famine these two places are our only hope in helping the world survive. The U.S. should turn its research to developing a method of WARP drive which will enable us to travel at speeds much faster than the speed of light.
>
> (F-77)

3. In the "acceptance" category, the following example showed a limited concern for the problems of present society:

> I think the world is pretty good, but that's because it's treated me pretty good. There are a lot of problems in the world that I am aware of, and a lot I'm most aware of. I don't like people who take pot or hard drugs, and I think their should be stricter punishments, mainly because I've seen a lot of good kids go bad. To be truthful, world affairs don't interest me much. I'd rather play football or basketball. I may sound like a real stupid person, because I don't really care about pollution, Viet Nam War, but I know they'll be my time to worry about these things and I personally would rather have a lot of fun now and worry about it when the time comes. I really don't think I could do anything about these problems because I'm too young.
>
> (F-36)

The range of student types in the answers given by the average ability students in Grade 10 was similar to that of the 11th and 12th grades. However, there were two examples that were probably written by negro students since they reflect a black cultural background. Let us examine these two examples:

> I think the world we presently know isn't together, because everybody (black and white) aren't together. For example, the Black girl says that the black boys are interested in the White girl, because their enchanted by their long hair and fair skin. There are many cases where there are Black women who have relationships with a white man, and most of the Black

> women say the White man treats you better than their Black man. True.If Black had unity they worked together, then I would be against, the relationships of Black and White. Because the Whites would break our unity. Yet there is no unity between the Black people. Blacks destroy Blacks, White destroy white, Black and White destroy each other, and take drugs and steal. So all these things they do together, why not make love together (integration).
>
> I want it to be different like I said before (integrated) Black and White together. Instead of Black and Black, White and White, etc.
>
> (F-11)

> I think the world we presently know is very bust. The things that need to be different are the way older people treat people their age from other races and society. The whites should try to understand the blacks not always put them down because of the color of their skin.
>
> In Schools, teachers that are overly prejudice should not be able to teach at all. Because a black child can not learn if a teacher's going to give him a "C" when he really deserves a "A". And this is wrong anyway. No white man is superior to any race.
>
> (F-8)

CONCLUSIONS AND/OR IMPLICATIONS

How might we interpret these responses to the world-now question in terms of its importance for the teaching of history? As Grannis and Letzter indicated:

> ...the students we solicited made very little reference to past time, or, more to the point, made very little use of past history to clarify the problems they felt in the present. Their responses to this query were very much in the existential mode....[6]

One could explain this finding by merely pointing out that rapid social change in an urban and industrial society makes

the past "increasingly distant from the present," and therefore, irrelevant. However, it would be tragic indeed if the world-view of high school youth were to be dismissed by educators as nothing more than a reaction to a rapidly changing society, and that adolescent youth must therefore learn to cope with the strains of a changing society.[7] That is to say, we should not fail to hear the message of these students, for running through their responses to the world-now question is a genuine and basic dissatisfaction with our present world. Thus teachers of history and the social studies should take account of this existential uncertainty among young people today, if they intend to offer a social studies program that is both relevant and meaningful.

The teacher of history and the social studies can help young people to maintain personal stability in a time of rapid change and uncertainty by helping to foster in each of their students a sense of self that will connect their personal lives to the collective past of world society. In a time of rapid change, such continuity requires more work since the past "grows progressively more different from the present in fact, and seems more remote and irrelevant psychologically."[8]

In conclusion, history and the teaching of history can play a key role in helping high school and college students

develop an awareness of their continuity with the past -- an awareness of enduring relationships, principles, institutions that are maintained despite the changes brought about by an urban and industrialized world - environment. But the history teacher must help the student not only to understand his relationship with the past. He must also help him "to anticipate his course in the future."[9] The teacher of history then has the difficult job of providing possible points of continuity in relation to possible future conditions in society. He can start doing this by encouraging his students to reflect on which institutions, principles, and so on, will most probably endure in the future.[10]

FOOTNOTES

1. Grannis, Joseph C. and Letzter, Fredrick P. "Thucydides Began to Write When They First Took Up Arms." Paper read at the Annual Meeting of the American Historical Association, Boston, Massachusetts, December 28, 1970.

2. Ibid., p.4.

3. Hertzberg, Hazel W. "The Now Culture: Some Implications for Teacher Training Programs." Social Education, 34, March 1970, pp.272-273.

4. Peterson, Richard E. "The Student Left in American Higher Education." Daedalus, 97, Winter 1968, p.299.

5. Grannis and Letzter, op. cit., p.8.

6. Ibid.

7. Keniston, Kenneth. "Social Change and Youth in America." The Challenge of Youth, ed. Erik H. Erikson. Garden City, New York: Anchor Books, 1965, pp. 193,200.

8. Ibid., pp. 200, 212.

9. Loretan, Joseph O. and Umans, Shelley. Teaching the Disadvantaged. New York: Teachers College Press, 1966, p.141.

10. See Toffler, Alvin. Future Shock. New York: Random House, 1970, Chapter 17.